



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**


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TO: N.C. Licensed Adult Care Home & Family Care Home Providers  
N.C. Certified Adult Care Home Administrators  
N.C. Approved Family Care Home Administrators

FROM: Megan Lamphere, Chief   
DHSR Adult Care Licensure Section (ACLS)

RE: Hurricane Preparedness & COVID-19 and Available Training

As you know, we are in the midst of “hurricane season” which typically spans from June 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> every year. While every year we plan and prepare for hurricanes, this year presents a unique challenge as we are simultaneously trying to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. Should a hurricane impact our State this year, the emergency response at the State, local and facility levels may look much different.

Licensed facilities are required by 10A NCAC 13F .0309(d)/10A NCAC 13G .0316(f) to have a written disaster plan which has the approval of, or has been documented as submitted to, the local emergency management agency. The plan must be updated at least annually and maintained in the facility. In addition, all staff must be trained in the facility’s emergency procedures. (10A NCAC 13F/G .1211(b))

To prepare for a hurricane event, facilities should ensure that the emergency preparedness disaster plan is comprehensive, facility-specific, and tailored to meet the health and safety needs of the residents before, during, and after such an emergency. At a minimum, hurricane preparedness plans should address all of the following areas:

- Provision for ensuring the health and safety of residents and staff when sheltering in place, including protecting the facility itself from damage or flooding, supplies, emergency power, food and water, sufficient staffing, and emergency equipment.
- Identification of residents with Alzheimer’s disease or other types of dementia, residents with mobility limitations, and any other residents who need specialized assistance, equipment or accommodations either at the facility or in case of evacuation.
- Plans and procedures for the care of all residents in the event evacuation from the facility is needed, including identification of residents, transfer and safekeeping of

resident records and medications, evacuation transportation, sheltering arrangements and back-up arrangements, supplies, staffing, and emergency equipment.

\*Note: For adult care homes, evacuation to a public emergency shelter should only be considered as a last resort. Facilities should plan and coordinate with other licensed adult care homes to ensure safe and appropriate care of residents during an emergency. This may also apply to family care homes whose residents have cognitive or physical impairments that may make going to a public emergency shelter an unsafe option.

- Plans and procedures to ensure the care of residents who are evacuated to the facility during an emergency, including identification of residents, supplies and staffing, should the facility intend to shelter residents and staff from another adult care home that has evacuated.
- Identification of and coordination with the local emergency management agency.
- Identification of appropriate local and state resources for emergency response and recovery.
- Procedures for notifying state and local agencies, as well as families and legal guardians, of a facility's decision to evacuate and/or any other issues impacting the health or safety of residents before, during or after the emergency.
- Identification of staff responsible for implementing each part of the facility's hurricane preparedness plan.

Again this year, facilities should submit a waiver request to the DHSR Adult Care Licensure Section (ACLS) if the facility is planning to shelter residents from an evacuating adult care home. These waivers of certain licensure rules will be considered in accordance with § G.S. 131D-7, when an emergency or disaster has been declared and upon request by the emergency management agency. Waiver request forms with instructions can be found on the DHSR ACLS website at <https://info.ncdhhs.gov/dhsr/acls/acforms.html#resident> and will be reviewed by the ACLS and the DHSR Construction Section to ensure the safety of residents.

Additionally, considering the many changes in our communities and challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, facilities should immediately and frequently review their hurricane preparedness plans to account for various factors that may impact the current plan. Some of the things that facilities should consider and be aware of when reviewing their hurricane preparedness plan in the time of COVID-19 are:

- The need for a sufficient supply of PPE for staff and residents in the event normal supply chains are interrupted.
- Strategies for optimizing the supply of PPE, especially during the emergency.
- Update the facility's vendor agreements to procure and deliver supplies and equipment in case of a shortage, including food and personal hygiene supplies. If a facility does not contract with vendors, consider building a back-up supply of necessary items.
- Confirm with transportation vendors that they are still in operation and available to assist in the event of a facility evacuation.

- Confirm with the locations the facility has identified for evacuation to ensure the location is available and willing and able to accept/shelter the residents and staff if needed. If yes, the facility should also determine what, if any, are the restrictions or protocols related to COVID-19 at the sheltering location, including if the location is willing and able to accept residents who are COVID-19 positive or if the receiving facility has any positive cases and if yes, how those positive residents can be successfully isolated.
- Confirm with the local emergency management agency what sheltering options are available and what the restrictions and requirements are for sheltering at those sites. There is expected to be a decreased capacity at local shelters in order to allow for social distancing.
- If your facility typically shelters residents from other adult care homes during an emergency, consider what protocols will be implemented to prevent transmission of COVID-19 in the facility such as examining the physical layout of the facility to allow for social distancing, screening visiting staff and residents for symptoms of respiratory illness, availability of PPE and other supplies, etc.
- Ensure a sufficient fuel supply for generators as some areas may experience fuel shortages.
- Contact residents' families in advance to determine if residents would be able to evacuate to a family member's home in the event of an emergency or staffing shortage due to the hurricane.
- Review staffing plans and develop a contingency plan for staffing shortages caused by COVID-19, a hurricane event, or both to ensure adequate staffing before, during and after the emergency. Note: In prior years, facilities have allowed staff who are assigned to work during a hurricane to bring their family and children to stay at the facility. This may not be advisable or optional at this time due to the risk of transmitting COVID-19.

Now is the time to finalize your preparations! We strongly encourage each facility to reach out to their local emergency management agency to identify resources available in the area and discuss potential changes to the facility's hurricane preparedness plan as a result of COVID-19. To find your local emergency management agency, go to <https://www.ncdps.gov/Emergency-Management/EM-Community/Directories/Counties>.

Please make sure staff and managers are well-trained and knowledgeable of the facility's emergency preparedness procedures to ensure resident safety. We strongly encourage facilities to conduct a table-top exercise to walk through the facility's plans so that staff can be confident in what to do. Facilities should also be communicating with residents and their families and legal guardians so they know what to expect.

Lastly and importantly, to assist facilities in their emergency and hurricane preparedness efforts, the DHSR Adult Care Licensure Section (ACLS) has developed a training titled, "Emergency Preparedness in Assisted Living: Are You Ready?" which will be available on

Tuesday, August 4<sup>th</sup> at the following link

[https://goto.webcasts.com/starthere.jsp?ei=1352402&tp\\_key=a56ee878e0](https://goto.webcasts.com/starthere.jsp?ei=1352402&tp_key=a56ee878e0) and will be posted on the ACLS website. We strongly recommend that facility managers and staff review this training as soon as practicable to ensure the facility's hurricane preparedness plan will protect the health and safety of the residents in their care.

I am deeply appreciative for the front-line staff who are caring for our most vulnerable citizens every day during these unprecedented times. I hope that owners, administrators and managers of our licensed facilities will take great care to thoroughly prepare for the possibility of severe weather during this pandemic to ensure the safety of those front-line staff and the residents in their charge.